Northside Explosion

2-7-63 Trib.

N 16th St

Elizabeth

Browns Swap Shop

TERRE HAUTE, IND., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1963. Price 10c

Explosion Wrecks Building, Rocks North Side; 18 Hurt

(Photo by Charles)

EXTINGUISH BLAZE AT EXPLOSION SCENE—Terre Haute firemen stand guard yesterday afternoon after extinguishing a blaze set off by the explosion at a second-hand store at Sixteenth Street and Lafayette Avenue. The blast rocked the area about 3:30 o'clock yesterday afternoon, leveled Brown's Swap Shop and ripped open a barber shop and home in the background. Many houses and buildings in the immediate area were extensively damaged by the explosion. Eighteen persons were injured.

Four-Block Area Shaken by Blast; Homes Damaged

BY IRV DEVITT

A violent explosion leveled a second-hand store and rocked homes in a four-block area of the city's North Side yesterday afternoon.

Eighteen persons were sent to Union Hospital for treatment, and four were admitted. None was in serious condition. It was the second explosion in three days and the third explosion of the new year.

Frantic mothers rushed from their homes in search of their children who were returning home from nearby Rankin School. An electric clock in one of the wrecked homes stopped at 3:25 o'clock.

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POLICE CHIEF Frank Riddle ordered families in a four-block area evacuated while Terre Haute Gas Company crews shut off all service in the neighborhood.

An eyewitness, Mrs. Betty Stewart, 28 years old, 3030 North Thirteenth and One-half Street, was blown out of her shoes as she walked away from the Swap Shop, 1600 Lafayette Avenue, seconds before the blast destroyed the large frame building.

Mrs. Stewart was admitted to Union Hospital suffering from head and leg injuries. Her condition, however, was not serious.

"I was waiting for my son to come from school," Mrs. Stewart told a reporter, "when I heard a hissing sound coming from the ground across the street. I walked over to the corner of Lafayette Avenue and saw bubbles coming from the ground. As I returned to the other side of the street, I was blown off my feet."

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MRS. STEWART crawled to a nearby home and was rushed to the hospital when an ambulance arrived.

Another victim, Mrs. Rosalie Powell, 28, 1608 Lafayette Avenue, was standing at Fifteenth Street and Lafayette Avenue when the explosion blew her into the street. She said she heard a "bubbling sound" coming from the ground just be-

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Vigo Schools Close To Check Heating

Closing of all buildings of the Vigo County School Corporation, including the Administration Building and Adult Education Center today and tomorrow for checking of heating units was authorized last night by the Board of School Trustees.

Custodial staff in the buildings will be on duty but neither children, teachers nor administrative staff will report.

The Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library and its branches will be open as usual, it was stated.

Parochial schools, including Schulte High School, will not be closed, church officials said.

Residents Near Scene of Blast Evacuate Homes

Thankful that the effects of an explosion that demolished a second-hand store at 1600 Lafayette Avenue about 3:30 o'clock yesterday afternoon were not more serious, neighborhood residents and business operators last night made preparations for another day.

All of the residents in the 3000 block of North Sixteenth Street had to find other lodgings for the night. Most of the windows in the blocks were blown out by the force of the blast.

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HARVEY NICKEL, executive director of the Wabash Valley Chapter of the Red Cross, said an emergency headquarters was set up in Rankin School to handle hardship cases. Any assistance needed by persons left homeless could be obtained by contacting the temporary office, he said.

Hundreds of persons left the area to seek lodgings with friends and relatives. Windows were shattered in a four-block area and some complaints were received from homeowners six blocks away.

Force of the explosion was felt by residents as far north as North Terre Haute, police said.

Roy Lamb, 2730 North Thirteenth Street, was working in Dave and Leason's Zephyr Gas Service, 1631 Lafayette Avenue, when he heard the explosion.

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"I WAS KNOCKED back against a wall, and three customers in the station were knocked to the floor," Lamb related. "When I looked out, all I could see was bricks and dust flying."

Lamb then drove Jim Powell, operator of Jim's Barber Shop, adjacent to the demolished store; Powell's wife, Rosalie, 28, and the couple's two children, Stanley, 7, and Jean Ann, 6, to Union Hospital. Mrs. Powell was admitted to the hospital, but the others were treated and released.

Calvin L. Sickles, 3016 North Sixteenth Street, was awakened by the sound of the blast. "I jumped up with a mouth full of plaster," Sickles said. He

See RESIDENTS On Page 3, Column 4

(Photo by Charles)

Y BLAST RUINS—Assistant Detective Chief Gene Butts, center, and an unidentified en check over the ruins of the explosion at Sixteenth Street and Lafayette Avenue rday afternoon. The blast ripped open the wall to a barber shop, in background, and lished the car at right.

(Photo by Charles)

FIRE RAGES NEAR GAS REGULATOR—Firemen at left nearly hidden by flame, battle blaze around gas regulator, while other persons at right examine ruins of the second-hand store for accumulation of gas. Officials discovered a large concentration of gas after yesterday's blast in immediate area of the demolished building and nearby homes and businesses were evacuated. The area was sealed off from traffic in a six-block area between Delaware and Fort Harrison Avenues.

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e explosion. She, too, mitted to Union Hospital. admitted were Woodrow n, 36, 3105 North Four- and One-half Street, suf- with abdominal pains, nice Austin, 18, 2406 Jef- Street, suffering with a injury incurred when she ck by falling debris.

n who were examined ated were James Powell, Lafayette Avenue, and children, Stanley, 7, and nn, 6; Willard Rodirus, 6 North Fourteenth and lf Street; Mrs. Helen 64, 3012 North Sixteenth Sally Bumpus, 3, and her Mary Jo Ann, 5, and Bruce, 8, of 3015 North th Street.

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MIKE KEITH, 9, 3132 Thirteenth Street; Goldie 69, 1601 Lafayette Ave- Gilbert Aird, 47, 1616 tte Avenue; Carol Bari- R. R. 7; Shirley Cresson North Sixteenth Street, lark Haywood, 50, a gas oy employe who fell in bri.

ell operates the barber djacent to the demolished g. Mike Keith was in the chair when the blast oc- , while Rodirus was watt- a haircut.

Bartley and Miss Austin visiting Miss Cresson at ne. Mrs. Doan was baby- with the Bumpus chil- hen the blast shook the

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NE WAS in the Swap at the time. The owners n open yesterday, neigh reported.

gas company official, Del- logers, said there was no ervice to the store, but an ground gas regulator is the demolished building. at this site that detectors ted an accumulation of orkmen said.

ers explained that service e neighborhood was shut a precautionary measure, crews immediately were ing each meter and re- g service, he said.

en asked if the recent ng weather could cause res in the gas lines, a gas ary employe answered that s "very possible." Work- said in the city they had about 30 inches deep be- passing the freeze line. An- other crew reported they had dug more than three feet deep on the north side of the city before coming to the freeze line.

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LAST NIGHT, business owners in the area were boarding up broken windows. Many home- owners were attempting to shut off water flow through lines ruptured by concussion from the blast.

State police detoured south- bound traffic at the intersec- tion of the new bypass of U. S. Highway 41, while city and Civil Defense police routed traffic around the area.

Workers returning home after the morning shift were rerouted along side streets. Cars were jammed along Lafayette Avenue.

Emergency crews restored light and telephone service to the area almost immediately after arriving at the scene. Red Cross and Salvation Army volunteers were in the area pro- viding the homeless and work crews with nourishment.

Meeting Canceled

Jack Roeschlein, vocational agriculture instructor at Honey Creek High School, announced last night that adult farmer classes scheduled for the school tonight have been canceled be- cause of the closing of schools for a check of the heating systems.

Heart Fund

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Keith, West Terre Haute; Mrs. H. Ralph Johnson, Prairieton Township; Mrs. Earl Heckels- burg, North Terre Haute; Mrs. Helen Harbaugh, Lewis; Mrs. Dan Earle, Marywood; Mrs. Her- bert Kammer, Robinwood; Mrs. William Clark, Woodridge; Mrs. James Williams, Terre Vista; Mrs. Frances Hyde, Sellyville; Mrs. Gary Smith, Honey Creek Township; Mrs. D. B. Strick-

Residents

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said his electric clock stopped at 3:25 o'clock.

Gerald Loudermilk, 3108 North Fourteenth and One-half Street, a city policeman, had just returned home from duty when he heard the explosion.

"I heard something go 'ka- boom', and ran outside to see debris flying almost 150 feet in the air."

Loudermilk phoned in the first alarm and ran to the area to help where needed.

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LEON CORNES, 2836 North Fourteenth and One-half Street, said he "was lifted off the ground about two feet" when the force hit his home. Windows throughout the house were broken, Cornes added.

At 2641 North Seventeenth Street, Mrs. Amanda Jackson said she came home to find her home all "tore up."

Six-year-old Jimmie Thomp- son, said, "It almost knocked me down." Jimmie and his brother, Gary, 4, were playing in a truck near their home at the time. Their mother, Mrs. Sarah Thompson, 3005 North Sixteenth Street, put the chil- dren in the family truck and drove out of the area. She said they probably would stay with relatives until the damage was repaired.

Four blocks away, Mrs. Thom- as Carpenter, 2636 North Six- teenth Street, said she was "half scared to death" when she heard the "boom." She ran out and searched for her two children who were returning from school. Plaster was cracked and pictures were knocked from the walls, she said.

Officials said it was too early to determine just how much damage was done. A conserva- tive figure was estimated at $250,000 by one city official.

CENTER OF WEDNESDAY'S EXPLOSION WHICH WREAKED DAMAGE OVER WIDE NORTHSIDE AREA INJURING 18 PERSONS

PHOTO BY BRUCE

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